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ABSTRACT

The author contends that there is a strong relationship between a students' scholastic success and self-image. Following a brief literature review, the Self-Anchoring Attitude Scale (SAAS), an inventory designed to assess attitude, is discussed. Each subject is asked to write down what they would say about students who like to learn, and what they would say about students who dislike to learn. After the students identify the two ends of the continuum, they are asked to mark, from 1 to 9, where they believe they are in reference to students who like to learn and students who dislike to learn. A teacher can use this information in assessing the students' self image toward learning. A twenty-page list of references is included. (Author/JAC)

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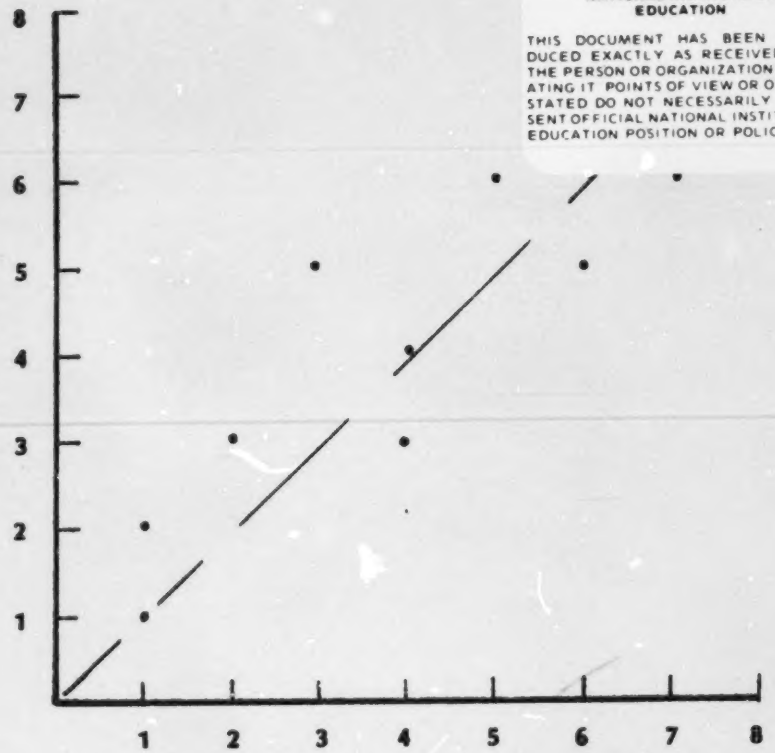

SELF-CONCEPT AND LEARNING

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SELF-CONCEPT & LEARNING

A review of literature on the relationship between students self-concept and school achievement, and one way to assess a students attitude toward learning.

September 1978

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Research studies indicates that there is a relationship between self concept and academic achievement. A study conducted in the early sixties concluded that the self concept of ones academic ability is associated with academic achievement at each grade level. (Brookover, Paterson and Thomas, 1964). There appears to be a positive relationship between boys' self concept and their achievement but less of a positive relationship for girls. (Campbell 1965, Bledsoe 1967).

Caplin (1966) found that black students who professed a more positive self concept tended to have higher academic achievements. Purky (1970) reports in, Self Concept and School Achievement that successful students are ones who are likely to see themselves as positive individuals. He reports a study by Gowan that indicates high achievers are characterized by self confidence, self acceptance and a positive self concept. Farls (1967) studied intermediate level students and found that the high achieving students reported higher self concepts than low achieving boys and girls.

Purky (1970) reports that a composite portrait of the successful student would show that she/he has a relatively high opinion of one and is optomistic about her/his future performance (Ringness, 1961). He continues by reporting three more studies describing successful students as having confi ace in their general ability as a students (Brookover, 1969) needing fewer favorable evaluations (Dittes, 1959) and feeling that they work hard, are liked by other students, and are generally polite and honest (Davidson and Greenberg, 1967)."

Most researchers who have studied self attitudes believe that students who fail to live up to their own academic expectations suffer losses in self esteem. An example of this is the study done by Gibby and Gibby (1967).

Carin and Sund (1971) suggest that it is through the development and valuing of a person's talent that ones self concept is built. They suggest that all instructors should assess how students view themselves, for it is how a person sees one that best predicts how one will react. Yamamoto (1972) reports in The Child and His Image that people perceive and identify themselves as they believe others perceive and identify them. Therefore, it is important that a child be seen in a positive light. Butler (1970) reports that a child's classmates have far greater consequence on the child's intellectual, emotional, and social development than was once believed. From these studies it is evident that a positive environment enhances the development of a positive self image.

Glasser, in his book Schools Without Failure (1969) is highly critical of schools in blocking the achievement of students. He feels that because students do not experience success they become failures. He suggests that schools reward students who perform well but expose those who are unable to successfully compete. This repeated exposure to failure convinces one that they are failures. In a study by Ludwig and Maehr (1967) they concluded that the student's physical self concept, general self concept, and their preference for physical activities increased following the approval of various simple physical tasks. Thus suggesting that authentic reward improves self concept.

There is a positive relationship between self concept and academic achievement. While many of these studies are correlation studies and do not suggest cause and effect, they imply that the successful students see themselves as positive individuals and that the failing students

do have poor self esteem. Although the research does not provide evidence as to which comes first the positive self concept or scholastic success, it does suggest a strong relationship between the two.

AN INSTRUMENT TO ASSESS ATTITUDE

Since there is a strong relationship between scholastic success and school achievement, schools should encourage both positive self images and academic excellence. Assessing a student's academic achievement is generally easier than assessing their self image. Explained here is an approach to assessing ones self image as a learner. The Self-Anchoring Attitude Scale (Figure 1) can be used to assess a student's attitude toward learning. The Self-Anchoring Attitude Scale SAAS is an inventory designed to assess attitude. It is unique that each individual is asked to describe the end points of the dimension under examination. In this case the student's attitude toward learning. Students are asked to write down what they would say about students who like to learn, and what they would say about students who dislike to learn. The students' list at the top of the SAAS form "Characteristics of students who like to learn" and at the bottom of the page "Characteristics of students who dislike to learn". After the students identify the two ends of the continuum they are asked to mark on a ladder where they believe they are in regard to students who like to learn and students who dislike to learn. They may rate themselves between 1 and 9. They mark 9 if they are like those students who like to learn. They mark 1 if they are like those students who dislike to learn, or they mark numbers anywhere between 1 and 9.

It is through this process that the self image toward learning is assessed. The students have described those who like to learn, they have also rated themselves on the SAAS form where they are in relationship to these students.

It is from the description of what the students wrote down about students who like to learn which identifies how they perceive students with positive self images toward learning. And at the bottom of the page they have identified students with the negative self image toward learning. On the form they have also rated themselves with regard to these two ends of the dimension.

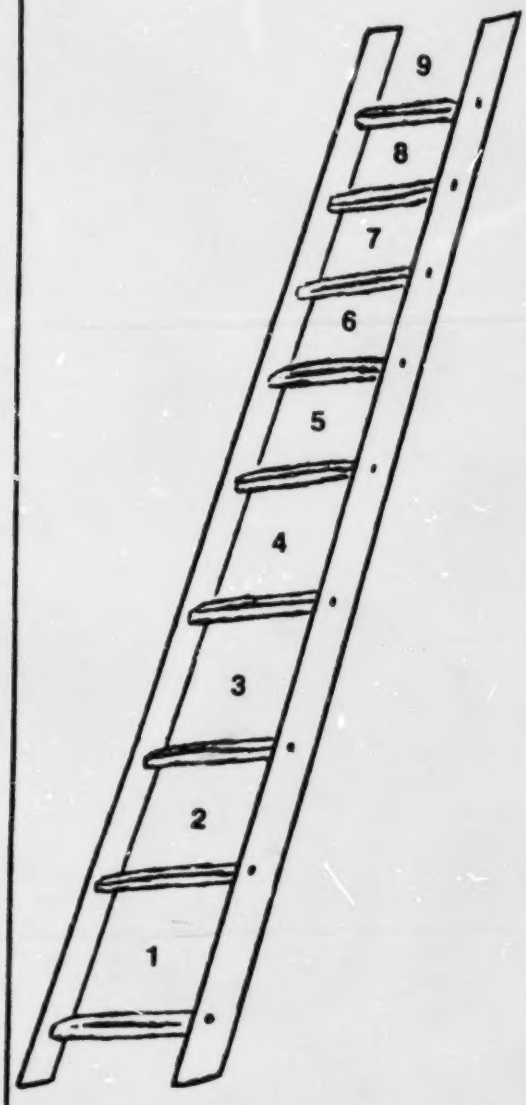
A teacher can use this information in assessing the students' self image toward learning. They can see what a student believes to be a good learner. They can then work with that student using the information provided by the student. The information can be validated by discussing it with the individual student.

The information which is collected is valuable because the scale is student generated and not superimposed on them. What one student believes to be a good learner another student may see as a characteristic of a poor learner. The SAAS is flexible but it will magnify the relativeness of attitudes.

Nevertheless, much information is generated by administering the Self-Anchoring Attitude Scale and the information which is collected can be extremely helpful in assessing one's image toward learning.

Figure 1
Self Anchoring Attitude Scale Toward Learning

NAME _____
SCHOOL _____
GRADE _____
DATE _____



NAME _____
SCHOOL _____
GRADE _____
DATE _____

STUDENTS WHO LIKE TO LEARN

STUDENTS WHO DISLIKE TO LEARN

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